against phasing out of freight equalisation scheme in respect of iron and steel. These views will have to be taken into account while working out the modalities.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Sir, first of all, I would like to remind the hon. Minister that on July 13, 1985 it was stated by the then Minister that modalities would be worked out as soon as possible. I think he assured that it would be done within three months. Again this was also repeated on 26th November, 1985 that the modalities were being worked out. In this case, Sir, time-frame is very much important. Would the hon. Minister be pleased to assure the House that the modalities would be worked out within a definite time-frame?

SHRI K. C. PANT: Sir, the difficulty in giving such an assurance is that some States are strongly in favour of early phasing out and some States are strongly against. And the States which are farther away from the steel plants make out a case that for 30 years freight-equalisation has been in operation and that any sudden departure from this practice will lead to great difficulties for them, that adjustments will have to be made, that industries which have been set up on the basis of freight-equalisation will suddenly face a new situation, that more resources will have to be found and so on. I think, one must have some understanding for their predicament also, and that is the reason why one has to be careful in the timing of the phasing out.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Sir, I think the hon. Minister is well aware of the fact that the eastern region is being deprived of the locational advantages because of this policy. Would the Government take into consideration while taking a final decision about this phenomenon which I have referred to and further assure the House that the Government would not yield to the pressure of any interested lobby in the country?

SHRI K. C. PANT: I have no difficulty in giving the assurance in regard to not yielding to lobbying or pressure either from my friend or anybody else.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Reduction of steel prices

*283. SHRI MUKHTIAR SINGH MALIK:

SHRI SHANKER SINH VAGHELA:

Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to bring down the steel prices in the country;

(b) if so, what are the details of the proposal; and

(c) by when the prices are likely to be reduced?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI K. C. PANT): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Application of nuclear science in Agriculture

*285. SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) what important research in agriculture is being done through the application of nuclear science; and

(b) what is the number of research centres where the work is being done for the use of radio-active isotopes in agriculture?